MANHATTAN.
OKAY, REALLY?
MASS VILLAIN ESCAPE FROM THE COURTHOUSE AND WE'RE STUCK FIGHTING A CHICK WITH A ZIT FOR A HEAD? NAMED RUBY THURSDAY?
Y'KNOW, HAVING IT SERVED UP ON A SILVER PLATTER TAKES ALL THE FUN OUT OF BEING SNARKY.
ROH

PEER PRESSURE

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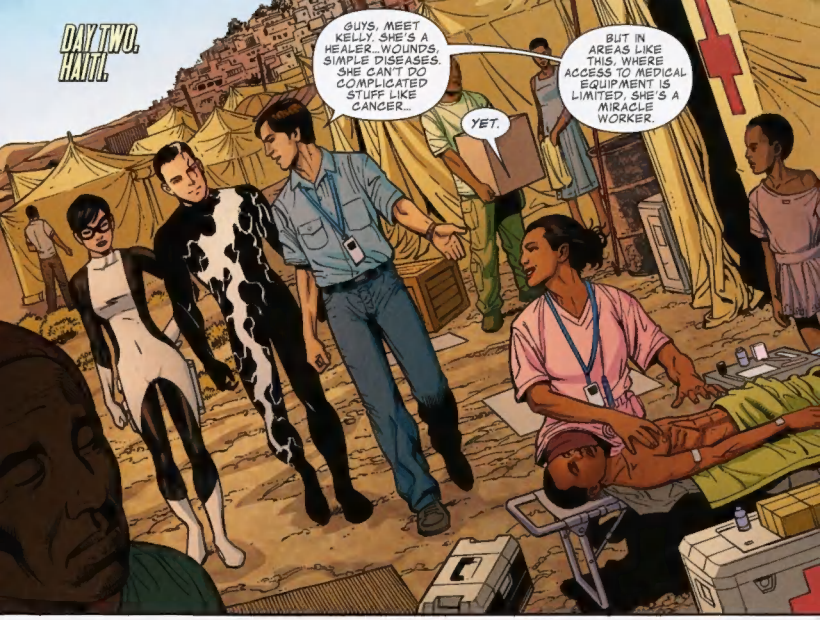
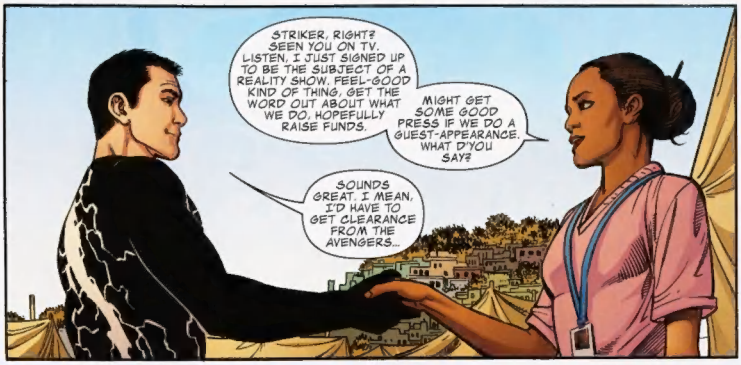
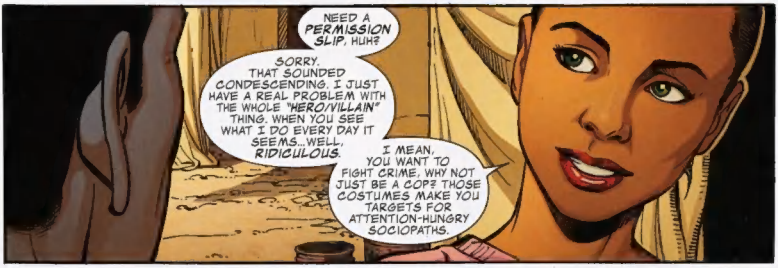
I-I ONLY HIT HARD ENOUGH TO KNOCK HER OUT...
METTLE, HER HEAD'S ARTIFICIAL. WE SHOULDN'T ASSUME DECAPITATION IS--
A PROBLEM? IT'S NOT.
THE LACK OF BLOOD SHOULD'VE BEEN A CLUE. OBVIOUSLY THE AVENGERS AREN'T TEACHING YOU BIOLOGY.
I'VE GOT HER! I'LL--
IT'S OKAY, REPTIL, STAND DOWN.
KRNCH
WE'VE ROUNDED UP THE REST OF THE ESCAPEES. WE'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.
TYPICAL. DR. PYM AND OUR TEACHERS ARE GONNA GRAB ALL THE GLORY.
CAN YOU BLAME THEM? THEY DON'T WANT EVERYONE SAYING THE "JUNIOR VARSITY TEAM" LET MORE VILLAINS GET AWAY.

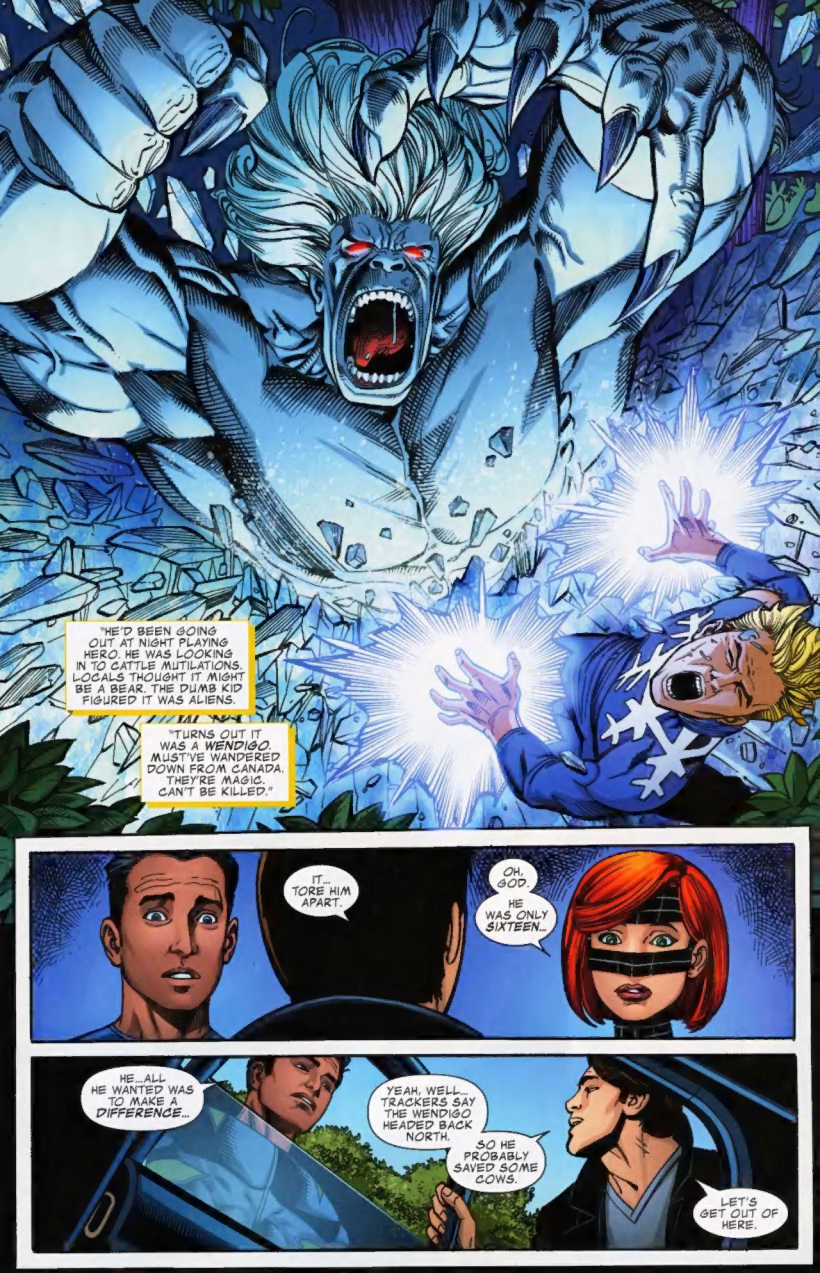
I'M SORRY I FREAKED, GUYS. I THOUGHT I'D KILLED HER, AND AFTER WHAT HAPPENED WITH KORVAC...
YOU DIDN'T KILL HIM EITHER, AND THAT WASN'T YOUR FAULT. WE'D ALL HAD OUR MINDS PUT INTO OUR ADULT BODIES; YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOUR OWN STRENGTH.
YEAH, BUT WHAT BUGGED ME--WHAT'S STILL BUGGING ME--IS THAT AS AN ADULT...I FELT USED TO KILLING. AND THAT'S... NOT ME.
BUT THE AVENGERS MUST'VE SEEN SOMETHING BAD IN ME, TO PUT ME ON THIS TEAM. TO LIE TO US AND SAY WE'RE THE MOST PROMISING FUTURE HEROES...
...WHEN THEY'RE REALLY JUST AFRAID WE'RE GOING TO BECOME VILLAINS.
OH, PLEASE, I AM SO SICK OF THAT SONG. I'M STARTING TO THINK THEY KNEW WE'D HACK INTO THEIR FILES AND JUST PLANTED THAT STUFF TO MAKE US ASHAMED OF OURSELVES.
UNLIKELY. THE FILES I ACCESSED WERE ENCRYPTED. AND THE AVENGERS HAD VALID REASONS FOR THEIR CONCERNS, SUCH AS WHAT YOU DID TO THAT MAN WHO--
OKAY! OKAY, I CAN SEE WHY THEY CHOSE ME. AND YOU, FINESSE...THE CHICK WHO MAKES VULCANS LOOK EMO. AND LITTLE MISS CHERNOBYL OVER HERE.
GET BENT.
BUT YOU'RE RIGHT, METTLE. YOU'RE MELLOWER THAN A SLOTH ON XANAX. AND VEIL...HOW MANY SUPER VILLAINS HAVE PONIES AND UNICORNS ALL OVER THEIR ROOMS?
DO I EVEN NEED TO MENTION REPTIL, WHO I'D BET MONEY IS WEARING CAPTAIN AMERICA UNDEROOS RIGHT NOW?
ALL I'M SAYING IS, IF WE'RE MOST LIKELY TO BE THE NEXT DR. DOOM, THE OTHER KIDS ON THAT LIST MUST'VE BEEN PRETTY WEAK.
WE COULD FIND OUT.
I REMEMBER EVERYTHING I SEE. FIGHTING STYLES, SKILLS...AND DATA. THERE WAS ANOTHER NAME ON THE AVENGERS' LIST.
A CANDIDATE WHO WAS ULTIMATELY REJECTED BECAUSE HE WAS CARVING OUT A PRODUCTIVE LIFE FOR HIMSELF IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.
AND I KNOW WHERE TO FIND HIM.

AN HOUR LATER.
...SO AFTER OSBORN'S INITIATIVE PROGRAM WAS SHUT DOWN, I WASN'T SURE WHAT TO DO WITH MYSELF. I MEAN, HE'D JACKED UP MY POWERS. A LOT.
I CAN CHANGE THE CHEMICAL MAKEUP OF MOST ANYTHING. THE MORE COMPLEX IT IS, THE TOUGHER IT GETS. BUT I'M STILL LEARNING.
I THOUGHT ABOUT CALLING MYSELF "THE ALCHEMIST"... PUTTING ON A COSTUME. EVEN HAD ONE MADE. THEN I TOOK ONE LOOK AT MYSELF IN IT AND FELL OVER LAUGHING.
I MEAN, I HATE WHAT NORMAN OSBORN DID TO US... ROUNDING UP KIDS WITH POWERS, EXPERIMENTING ON US...IT WAS TORTURE. BUT I HAD TO ADMIRE HIS VISION.
HE WANTED TO CHANGE THE WAY THE WORLD WORKS. HIS PROBLEM WAS HE STILL THOUGHT IN TERMS OF TIGHTS AND CAPES. ACTION FIGURES SMASHING INTO EACH OTHER.
NOW, ME... I DIDN'T GRADUATE M.I.T. AT SEVENTEEN BY THINKING INSIDE THE BOX.
SO I STARTED THIS COMPANY, FOCUSED ON REPLICATING NATURAL CHEMICAL REACTIONS IN A LAB.
OUR PROCESS FOR BREAKING DOWN OIL SPILLS WITHOUT DAMAGING THE ECOSYSTEM MADE ME A BILLIONAIRE.
I MAKE MORE OF A DIFFERENCE HERE THAN I EVER WOULD HAVE AS AN AVENGER. NO DISRESPECT, OF COURSE. YOU GUYS ARE DOING GREAT THINGS.
YEAH... FIGHTING WOMEN WHOSE HEADS ARE MADE OF RED SILLY PUTTY, AND LETTING THEM GET AWAY.
I REMEMBER SEEING OTHER KIDS AT OSBORN'S LAB. THEY HAD POWERS TOO. SOMETIMES I WONDER WHO'S BETTER OFF...
...US, RECRUITED TO AVENGERS ACADEMY... OR THEM, LEFT TO WORK OUT THEIR OWN LIVES?
WELL, I CAN SHOW YOU IF YOU WANT. I KEEP TRACK OF ALL THE ALUMS OF OSBORN U.
DON'T LOOK SO SURPRISED... WHEN YOU'RE RICH THE WORLD'S AN OPEN BOOK. COME BY AFTER CLASS NEXT WEEK. I'LL CLEAR SOME SPACE ON MY SCHEDULE.
WE'LL LOOK UP SOME OLD FRIENDS.


DAY TWO. HAITI.
GUYS, MEET KELLY. SHE'S A HEALER...WOUNDS, SIMPLE DISEASES. SHE CAN'T DO COMPLICATED STUFF LIKE CANCER...
YET.
BUT IN AREAS LIKE THIS, WHERE ACCESS TO MEDICAL EQUIPMENT IS LIMITED, SHE'S A MIRACLE WORKER.


STRIKER, RIGHT? SEEN YOU ON TV. LISTEN, I JUST SIGNED UP TO BE THE SUBJECT OF A REALITY SHOW. FEEL-GOOD KIND OF THING. GET THE WORD OUT ABOUT WHAT WE DO. HOPEFULLY RAISE FUNDS.
MIGHT GET SOME GOOD PRESS IF WE DO A GUEST-APPEARANCE. WHAT D'YOU SAY?
SOUNDS GREAT. I MEAN, I'D HAVE TO GET CLEARANCE FROM THE AVENGERS...


NEED A PERMISSION SLIP, HUH?
SORRY. THAT SOUNDED CONDESCENDING. I JUST HAVE A REAL PROBLEM WITH THE WHOLE "HERO/VILLAIN" THING. WHEN YOU SEE WHAT I DO EVERY DAY IT SEEMS...WELL, RIDICULOUS.
I MEAN, YOU WANT TO FIGHT CRIME, WHY NOT JUST BE A COP? THOSE COSTUMES MAKE YOU TARGETS FOR ATTENTION-HUNGRY SOCIOPATHS.


"HE'D BEEN GOING OUT AT NIGHT PLAYING HERO. HE WAS LOOKING IN TO CATTLE MUTILATIONS. LOCALS THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE A BEAR. THE DUMB KID FIGURED IT WAS ALIENS.
"TURNS OUT IT WAS A WENDIGO. MUST'VE WANDERED DOWN FROM CANADA. THEY'RE MAGIC. CAN'T BE KILLED."
IT... TORE HIM APART.
OH, GOD. HE WAS ONLY SIXTEEN...
HE...ALL HE WANTED WAS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE...
YEAH. WELL... TRACKERS SAY THE WENDIGO HEADED BACK NORTH.
SO HE PROBABLY SAVED SOME COWS.
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.

AFTER SCHOOL SPECIAL

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Hello, prospective enrollees… welcome to AVENGERS ACADEMY. I'm your tour guide and writer, Christos Gage. Yep, we do a letters page here, old-school style…a place where you readers get to weigh in on what you think of our humble efforts. But since this is a Point One issue, and we've hopefully got some new readers checking us out, I'm going to skip the letters this time around. Instead I'll talk a bit about the book, and give you a sneak preview of what's coming up in AVENGERS ACADEMY… so hopefully you'll want to sign up for classes right away!

The Academy is a program started by Earth's Mightiest Heroes to train the Avengers of tomorrow. But our students soon discovered the dark secret behind the school: they're not the young superhumans most likely to become heroes, they're the most at risk of becoming villains. Some have dark pasts. Some, due to the nature of their powers and personalities, face even darker futures. How they and their teachers deal with the challenges facing them is the meat of our story.

And yes, there are teachers! You only saw Giant-Man's foot this issue, because we wanted to use the space we had to introduce you to the new characters you're less likely to be familiar with. But our faculty is comprised of some of the longest-serving and best known Avengers – the headmaster is none other than Hank Pym, now Giant-Man, who as Ant-Man helped found the team. Also on board are Tigra, Quicksilver, Justice, Speedball and Jocasta…all of who have complicated issues of their own. For more, check our intro page at the front of this issue.

We've also got an incredible creative team. You just saw the beautiful art of penciler Sean Chen, inker Scott Hanna and colorist Jeromy Cox (as well as watching letterer Joe Caramagna age before your eyes with all the words I make him put in). Living legend Tom Raney handles penciling duties as well…he's currently hard at work on the upcoming FEAR ITSELF tie-in issues, and it's amazing stuff! That's right, we have two pencilers…because we published more than twelve issues in the past year, and will do so again next year!

We just recently celebrated our first anniversary on this book, and the response from the readers has been overwhelming. We made a bunch of "best of 2010" lists, and have received praise to make us blush from all corners of the comics community. In this tough economy, the fact that a title featuring so many new characters is still around for a fifteenth issue is incredible in itself, never mind getting the kind of attention we've been honored with, thanks to all of you. Having nice things said about you is addictive…which is why we're planning for an even more amazing second year!

Looking ahead, we're about to start tying in with the big Marvel event currently running, FEAR ITSELF. I'm excited about this, because I've known a major crisis was coming to the Marvel Universe for some time, and I've been planning for it. For super heroes, these crises are like going to war. And for the kids of Avengers Academy, this is their first time on a battlefield. Oh, sure, they've fought super villains before, but war is different. It's something that can't be described, it can only be experienced. We've sent teenagers to battlefields ever since our country began. It still happens every day…and everyone who goes through it is changed forever. The same will be true for our heroes.

Of course, there'll be epic Marvel-style action as well, as a certain bad guy who has a grudge against Giant-Man returns…empowered as one of the villainous Serpent's Hammer-Wielders. And by the time it's all over, one of our students will be gone. Wait, do I mean dead? Do they quit, or get expelled? Or will they become a villain, as the Avengers have feared? Come on, I'm not telling…I want you to buy the book!

One thing's for sure: Fear Itself will shake things up. Big changes are coming to AVENGERS ACADEMY with issue #21. New students…new threats…new guest stars…an even bigger connection to the larger Marvel Universe than before…and a shocking mystery that will cast suspicion on everyone within these pages. So I hope you've liked what you saw here, and that you'll join us for the exciting times ahead!

To whet your appetite, here are some glimpses of upcoming covers by the dynamic Billy Tan. Oh, and please write in to let us know what you thought of this issue, whether you're a new reader or you've been here since #1! And if you want to catch up on what's come before, you can pick up the collection of our first six issues, AVENGERS ACADEMY VOL. 1: PERMANENT RECORD. Thanks for visiting…we hope you'll matriculate! Okay, enough with the hard sell…on to the pretty pictures!

Christos Gage

#15 – ON SALE 6/15

#16 – ON SALE 7/13

#17 – ON SALE 8/3

#18 – ON SALE 8/17

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